

To the Honorable Sarah Morrison,

First and foremost, Madam, I would like to preface this letter by thanking you for your time and consideration in light of the arduousness inherent to the duties of your title and position, which I have no doubt, are well earned, and deserved.

As I have come to learn over the past year and a half or so, “Thomas Develin”, is a name that has come to stir up a number of thoughts and feelings across varying numbers and groups of people. It is not the nature of his alleged words or actions that have brought him to this point that I intend to submit to you overall today, your Honor. I believe that your consideration of this case through your grace and wisdom, will lead you to such a conclusion in a manner that is most just and fair. As Abraham Lincoln once said: “These men ask for just the same thing, fairness, and fairness only. This, so far is in my power, they, and all others, shall have.” And I believe this in you.

I would like however your Honor, by your leave, if I may, state one personal opinion on the matter of Tom’s “negative motivating factors” in as much confidence and discretion as possible so far in as you see fit. I’d state that from knowing Tom, it is not of his character to be a conductor of his alleged actions organically. I believe that through his trauma from deployment, the “togetherness” that being in a deployed military unit can bring when coming home, combined with the misfortune of “leaning” on his unit guys, particularly a small group of specific individuals who just so happened to perpetuate toxic ways of thinking and behaving, Tom found himself caught up in this “group-think” mentality, as a means of fitting in and is suffering the unfortunate consequences of that.

I am not making excuses for Tom. But I do say this personally, as someone who spent 3 years and 10 months forward deployed consecutively, losing some of the best friends I’ve ever had as well as struggling with the transition of coming “home”. Understanding the difficulties and the vulnerabilities inherent in trying to find one’s place back in society outside of those who have shared the same or similar experiences as you, as well as



understanding the military mentality as a warfighting machine, especially when forward deployed, is often a very difficult journey for a young person to embark upon and can often lead to short-sided and self-destructive behavior upon their return. It is especially difficult if they do not understand and address what's going on with themselves internally and I believe that this specifically, has had a profound effect on Tom since joining the military and coming home from Afghanistan.

I have known Tom for a number of years. I have known Tom as an employee/subordinate, as a friend, and ultimately as I have come to consider him, a brother. People close to me have advised me not to - as well as asked me why I would - continue my relationship with Tom. To those who are willing, able to listen and understand, I explain, that regardless of the mistakes that Tom has made, the misguided, often confused struggles that he has been dealing with internally, I know Tom's true character. I have seen Tom's true character, not through expression of his words but through the conduct of his actions and his deeds, time and time again, even when it was easier for him not to do the right things, to do the hard things because they were right, he did them anyway. Even if it is difficult to see given the circumstances at hand, I believe bad influences played a strong roll on his otherwise vulnerable but good-natured disposition.

I have grown to trust Tom and let him into my closest inner-circle, one that I hold dear. I have seen that he truly is a "solid" person, albeit misguided by negative influences most definitely as I said, he, like us, is a person that has made mistakes, mistakes especially, persons - outside of war - could/would consider "deplorable" regardless of their context.

I could sit here and write you a list of moments in which Tom "showed up" time and time again, listing all of his many excellent personal attributes and outstanding character traits but even a list like that wouldn't do him justice any more than a biopic on a social/professional website or cover letter could encapsulate a person. His good character isn't quantifiable for - nor could it be fully conveyed in - a simple letter of only a few pages. His negative actions, albeit horrible in nature, pale in comparison to the person I know him to be. I can only hope that this may be, in its smallest of actions, conveyed by the fact of my writing you this letter at a minimum.

I have put my relationships with certain others on the line by maintaining my relationship with Tom simply because I believe



in standing up for what is right. I believe that when a good person has "lost their way" and made mistakes - as we all do - they deserve to have people there to help them find their way again - that gives us hope in humanity perhaps. Tom is no exception. Tom truly deserves people to believe in him, now more than ever, to lift him up, give him hope and give him the resources/opportunities he needs to recover from this. He is not one worth having us turn our backs on him simply because it is difficult, discomforting and/or inconvenient to do so. He, like all of us, is not a person without faults. But I say this without an inkling of doubt in my heart and my mind that he is quite literally one of the best people I have ever met, regardless of his mistakes.

I truly do hope that this letter finds you well your Honor. I sincerely hope also, that after weighing in all of the facts and matters of this case, albeit multifaceted (constitutionally, societally and politically speaking, to name a few), that through your grace and wisdom, you find it in yourself, through it all, to see Tom for who he truly is: a kind-hearted, caring, loving, considerate young man who has been "caught up", confused and misguided in life, albeit at a serious fault to himself. And, as a consequence of his mistakes, Tom has had many people, groups and institutions turn their backs on him. In his deserving of punishment, he is also deserving of your grace - the opportunity for guidance, understanding and a chance for redemption. Tom deserves your compassion and mercy in consideration of this case as an otherwise upstanding member of our society, a veteran who has served our country and as a young man currently enduring this very difficult lesson in his life. I hope to leave you with one last Abraham Lincoln quote if you would be obliged: "I have always found mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice".

I wish you the best Madam in your consideration of this case and hope that you find mercy on Tom. Thank you.

Very Respectfully,

Christian David Smith  
[smithdahlholdings@yahoo.com](mailto:smithdahlholdings@yahoo.com)  
(380) 208-2633